

NEWS

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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN FLORIDA: THIRD QUARTER 2005 **Sixteen counties top national average in wage growth**

In the third quarter of 2005, average weekly wages in Florida's 22 counties with employment of 75,000 or more, ranged from \$565 in Pasco to \$781 in Miami-Dade, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. (See table 1.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that while wage levels in all 22 of Florida's large counties were either lower than or close to the national average of \$777, wages were rising rapidly in the majority of these counties. In the third quarter of 2005, 16 of Florida's largest counties had over-the-year wage gains that exceeded the national growth rate of 6.1 percent, led by Collier County's 10.4-percent increase. (See chart 1.) Overall, Florida ranked 2nd highest in the nation in wage growth, with wages rising 8.1 percent over the year; however, the State's average weekly wage of \$708 was still almost \$70 below that for the nation.

Over-the-year wage changes

Six counties in Florida had over-the-year wage growth that ranked in the top 10 percent among the nation's 322 largest counties. (See table 1.) Collier County's percentage increase in wages (10.4 percent) ranked 10th highest nationally. Five other Florida counties followed closely in the ranking: Okaloosa (9.6 percent, 13th), Sarasota (9.2 percent, 15th), Manatee (9.1 percent, 18th), and Lake and Miami-Dade (both 8.9 percent, 21st). However, not all of the State's large counties enjoyed such strong wage growth in the third quarter of 2005. Three counties in the State ranked in the bottom one-third of the national ranking: Polk (4.8 percent, 223rd), Volusia (3.6 percent, 279th), and Brevard (2.1 percent, 301st).

Nationally, the largest growth in weekly wages in the third quarter of 2005 was the 19.0-percent gain recorded by Passaic County, N.J. Rounding out the top five were the counties of Fort Bend, Texas (15.4 percent); Boulder, Colo. (13.8 percent); and Harrison, Miss., and San Mateo, Calif. (both 12.7 percent). The average weekly wage gains for Harrison, Miss., and Orleans Parrish, La. (10.7 percent), were boosted as a result of the disproportionate job and pay losses in lower-paid industries following Hurricane Katrina. Overall, 132 large counties had a growth rate that exceeded the national growth rate of 6.1 percent. Five of the nation's largest counties experienced a decrease in wages in the third quarter of 2005. Clayton County, Ga., recorded the largest decline, down 5.1 percent over the past year, followed by Benton County, Ark. (-1.2 percent); Trumbull County, Ohio (-0.6 percent); Saginaw County, Mich. (-0.4 percent); and St. Joseph County, Ind. (-0.1 percent).

At the statewide level, the average weekly wage in Florida grew 8.1 percent from the third quarter of 2004 to the third quarter of 2005, second only to the 8.2-percent wage growth recorded in Arizona. Rounding out the top five were Wyoming (8.0 percent), Virginia (7.7 percent), and Maryland (7.6 percent). (See table 2.) Michigan and

Rhode Island recorded the lowest growth in average weekly wages over the past year, 4.1 percent, followed by the District of Columbia and Massachusetts (both 4.5 percent), and Maine and Tennessee (both 4.6 percent).

Wage levels

Among Florida's 22 largest counties, three had weekly wages close to the national average of \$777 in the third quarter of 2005: Miami-Dade (\$781), Palm Beach (\$768), and Duval (\$765). These three counties fell into the top half of the national ranking among the nation's 322 largest counties placing 111th, 120th, and 123rd, respectively. Three other counties in the State also had wage levels ranking in the top half: Brevard and Broward (both \$746, 150th), and Hillsborough (\$745, 152nd). (See table 1.) At the other end of the wage spectrum were three Florida counties with wages below \$600—Marion, Volusia, and Pasco. Average weekly wages in these counties were among the lowest in the nation, ranking them 312th, 313th, and 314th, respectively. Overall, 64 percent (206) of the large counties nationwide recorded an average weekly wage below the national level.

Among the 322 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,419. Santa Clara, Calif., ranked second with an average weekly wage of \$1,403, followed by Arlington, Va. (\$1,292); San Mateo, Calif. (\$1,268); and Washington, D.C. (\$1,265). Three of the top 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.); 3 were located in or around the San Francisco, California area (Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco); and 3 were located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (Arlington, Va., Washington, D.C., and Fairfax, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$486), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$499); Horry, S.C. (\$505); and Webb, Texas, and Yakima, Wash. (\$525 each).

On a statewide level, the average weekly wage in Florida, \$708, was 8.9 percent below the national average. This placed Florida in the middle of the ranking at 26th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 2.) Florida's average weekly wage was lower than neighboring Georgia's (\$748, 20th), but higher than Alabama's (\$669, 32nd).

Across the country, average wage levels were greater than \$900 per week for the top five in the nationwide ranking: District of Columbia (\$1,265), Connecticut (\$966), Massachusetts (\$947), New York (\$941), and New Jersey (\$928). Average weekly wages in the top five were at least 19 percent above the national level. At the other end of the scale, four states reported wages 75 percent or less of the national average: Montana (\$563), South Dakota (\$567), Mississippi (\$573), and North Dakota (\$581).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.6 million employer reports cover 132.9 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs; this result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. Over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not necessarily match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm. Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at www.bls.gov/cew/.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, see www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Atlanta Information Office at (440) 331-3415. Customers in the Miami area can reach us at (305) 358-2305. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Atlanta BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Atlanta by dialing (404) 331-3403.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

The measures of employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends. Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, with catastrophic effects in parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This event occurred after the August QCEW reference period and before the September period. Its effects are first reflected in the September QCEW employment counts and the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. QCEW nonresponse adjustment methods were modified for September 2005 to better reflect the impact of the hurricane in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi. For more information, see the QCEW section of the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site (www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.htm).

Hurricane Rita made landfall September 24, after the September reference period. The impact of this event did not warrant changes to QCEW methodology for the third quarter of 2005.

TECHNICAL NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series. The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (non-economic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 22 largest counties in Florida, third quarter 2005 (2)

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	132,929.3	\$777	--	6.1	--
Florida	7,801.6	708	26	8.1	2
Alachua, Fla.	124.4	665	253	(7)	-
Brevard, Fla.	204.1	746	150	2.1	301
Broward, Fla.	738.1	746	150	6.9	86
Collier, Fla.	125.1	722	170	10.4	10
Duval, Fla.	452.7	765	123	6.8	93
Escambia, Fla.	127.2	632	281	8.2	33
Hillsborough, Fla.	626.2	745	152	7.3	60
Lake, Fla.	80.7	600	304	8.9	21
Lee, Fla.	214.0	685	221	7.9	42
Leon, Fla.	148.8	679	232	7.8	47
Manatee, Fla.	122.5	624	290	9.1	18
Marion, Fla.	98.7	580	312	(7)	-
Miami-Dade, Fla.	1,003.2	781	111	8.9	21
Okaloosa, Fla.	83.6	642	271	9.6	13
Orange, Fla.	665.8	729	165	6.9	86
Palm Beach, Fla.	546.3	768	120	6.7	98
Pasco, Fla.	94.2	565	314	(7)	-
Pinellas, Fla.	441.9	687	214	7.7	51
Polk, Fla.	201.8	629	283	4.8	223
Sarasota, Fla.	158.9	679	232	9.2	15
Seminole, Fla.	171.5	699	200	7.0	79
Volusia, Fla.	164.3	571	313	3.6	279

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(7) Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.

Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, third quarter 2005 (2)

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	132,929.3	\$777	-	6.1	-
Alabama	1,905.9	669	32	6.4	17
Alaska	320.2	797	13	5.6	30
Arizona	2,511.8	748	20	8.2	1
Arkansas	1,165.7	599	46	4.9	43
California	15,443.3	887	6	7.0	8
Colorado	2,212.1	808	11	7.3	7
Connecticut	1,655.2	966	2	5.3	38
Delaware	420.1	823	9	7.0	8
District of Columbia	666.4	1,265	1	4.5	48
Florida	7,801.6	708	26	8.1	2
Georgia	3,960.8	748	20	5.2	40
Hawaii	606.0	714	24	5.8	23
Idaho	635.5	605	45	6.0	19
Illinois	5,820.7	825	8	5.9	21
Indiana	2,916.3	689	29	5.2	40
Iowa	1,461.1	641	37	6.1	18
Kansas	1,315.3	659	34	6.5	15
Kentucky	1,779.5	651	35	5.2	40
Louisiana	1,770.8	637	39	6.9	10
Maine	606.0	631	42	4.6	46
Maryland	2,526.5	854	7	7.6	5
Massachusetts	3,193.3	947	3	4.5	48
Michigan	4,353.1	787	15	4.1	50
Minnesota	2,671.9	790	14	4.9	43
Mississippi	1,098.4	573	49	5.9	21
Missouri	2,696.2	691	27	5.5	33
Montana	424.2	563	51	7.4	6
Nebraska	896.7	633	41	5.3	38
Nevada	1,242.5	750	19	6.7	12
New Hampshire	630.7	772	16	5.8	23
New Jersey	3,960.8	928	5	5.8	23
New Mexico	791.0	629	43	6.8	11
New York	8,394.8	941	4	5.7	26
North Carolina	3,903.7	690	28	5.7	26
North Dakota	335.4	581	48	6.0	19
Ohio	5,360.6	723	23	5.5	33
Oklahoma	1,482.5	612	44	5.7	26
Oregon	1,683.4	714	24	5.6	30
Pennsylvania	5,597.6	764	18	5.7	26
Rhode Island	488.9	736	22	4.1	50
South Carolina	1,831.2	637	39	5.6	30
South Dakota	381.6	567	50	5.4	35
Tennessee	2,724.0	689	29	4.6	46
Texas	9,659.3	767	17	6.7	12
Utah	1,135.1	647	36	6.6	14
Vermont	303.4	663	33	4.7	45
Virginia	3,617.7	815	10	7.7	4
Washington	2,820.6	801	12	6.5	15
West Virginia	702.9	589	47	5.4	35
Wisconsin	2,783.4	688	31	5.4	35
Wyoming	263.4	638	38	8.0	3
Puerto Rico	1,037.4	435	(5)	3.8	(5)
Virgin Islands	44.0	616	(5)	2.8	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages and over-the-year percent change in Florida's large counties, third quarter 2004-05

